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ON BEING A GERMAN, ACCORDING TO FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

In discussions on Germans and the condition of German society, the starting point is the assumption that nations exist and a belief that every man belongs to a nation. These theses are well grounded in public awareness and in science, journalistic writing and political discourse. Various aspects of national identity and of the existence of nations have been analysed, and the existence of nations has been taken for granted. In this way a nationalist viewpoint is reproduced. However, it should be remembered that nationalism is but one of many possible interpretations of the socio-political world. In the opposite view, cosmopolitanism, which has been known since Antiquity, one's homeland is the whole world. This negates the belief that the feeling of belonging to a nation constitutes a core element of a person. Many academics draw attention to the modern genesis of nations, and their conventional rather than natural character, thus negating the basis of nationalisms.¹ The reality in many European countries today shows that the idea that loyalty to the (nation) state is grounded in a national bond is no longer so obvious. We do not know whether in the future the feeling of national identity will be the essential binder of societies and whether differences between nations will have the same significance as today. For the above reasons, it is worthwhile to continue debating these issues.

The concept of nationalism was born in the 19th century.² It can be defined as a general view on the nation issue or reduced to a chosen aspect, for example ideologies, theories of nations' origin and of national identity. Research on nationalisms

¹ Ernest Gellner, for example, argued that nations emerged via modernisation processes and the transition to an industrial society. New inhabitants of growing cities did not feel affiliated to any group in the feudal hierarchy and searched for a new formula of their identity. Nationalist intellectuals created the concept of nation, and it has become enrooted in the public mind. See E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalisms*, Oxford 1983. Postmodern approaches are also interesting. For example E. Hobsbawm (ed.) *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1983. On the approach in which nation is viewed as an "imagined community" and not a real entity, see: B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1991.

² The term *nationalism* was used for the first time in 1798 by the anti-Jacobin French priest Augustin Barruel. A. Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*, London (1992) 2017, p. 163. According to Adam Wielomski, however, the term was first used by Maurice Barrès in his article "La querelle des nationalistes et des cosmopolites" published in *Le Figaro* on 4 July 1892, p. 1. A. Wielomski, *Nacjonalizm francuski 1886-1940. Geneza, przemiany i istota filozofii politycznej*, Warsaw 2007, p. 15.

dates back to the second half of the 19th century, and since then, various theories and interpretations of the phenomenon have been offered.³

For nationalists, nations are natural, homogeneous, specific, easily distinguishable and historically enrooted real entities existing always and everywhere. Since nations have been recognised to be the most important form of human organisation, everyone is obliged to protect the uniqueness of the community to which he or she belongs and to be loyal to it. The uniqueness – in the positive sense – of one's own nation is emphasised, and usually 'the others' are treated as enemies. Consequently, the arena of international relations is perceived in terms of rivalry or competition. To nationalists, the nation is the source of sovereignty, and they propose to create a state in which national interests are the priority. These basic theses, however, do not offer a complete vision of a socioeconomic and political arrangement and directions of change, as any ideology would. Thus we talk about many different nationalisms, i.e. views referring to nations, which complement various ideologies.⁴

In the 19th century, when nationalist ideologies and movements grew rapidly, cosmopolitan views were also present. In this regard, mention must be made of Friedrich Nietzsche, one of the bravest and most original philosophers.⁵ In his writings he used the terms *nation* and *nationality*, and in *Ecce Homo* he wrote: "[...] I am perhaps more German than modern Germans [...]."⁶ To understand what being a German meant to Nietzsche, and whether he was a nationalist or a cosmopolitan, one needs to analyse his perception of factors constituting national entity (among nation-forming factors, objective and subjective factors are distinguished) and of the views which a nation recognises as its highest values.⁷

³ For reviews of the concept of nationalism see: P. Lawrence, *Nationalism. History and Theory*, Harlow 2005; K. Jaskułowski, *Nacjonalizm bez narodów. Nacjonalizm w koncepcji anglosaskich nauk społecznych*, Wrocław 2009; A. D. Smith, *Nationalism*, Cambridge 2001.

⁴ Ideology is a set of ordered political ideas used to diagnose a current situation and postulating desired changes. See: R. Tokarczyk, *Współczesne doktryny polityczne*, Kraków 2003, pp. 24-29; A. Heywood, *op.cit.*, pp. 19-36. "Nationalism is not an independent doctrinal being and as such it complements other doctrines. Thus to describe an ideology or doctrine, it should not be used as a noun. [...] From the perspective of linguistic logic, only its adjectival form should be used: 'national' conservatism, 'national' liberalism, 'national' socialism, and so on." A. Wielomski, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

⁵ In his book about Nietzsche, Ivo Frenzel, wrote: "Beurteilt man die Bedeutung eines Philosophen nach der Wirkung, die seine Werke auf die Nachfahren haben, so steht Friedrich Nietzsche ebenbürtig neben Hegel, Marx, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer – er ist einer der wenigen grosser Denker des 19. Jahrhunderts, die ihrer Zeit weit voraus waren." I. Frenzel, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, Reinbeck 2000, p. 7.

⁶ F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*. *Ecce Homo Complete Works*, Volume Seventeen, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ECCE HOMO. *Why I am so wise*, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/52190/52190-h/52190-h.htm#WHY_I_AM_SO_WISE [3].

⁷ Actually, Nietzsche's name appears in the context of nationalism because the Nazis referred to him as an authority. This matter has been widely discussed, and it suffices to say that the Nazis abused his name and quoted him selectively, hardly being acquainted with his works. The issue of the manipulation and distortion of his ideas and his subsequent vindication has also been presented in various publications. For an overview in Polish, see, for example, M. Baranowska, *Nazizm kontra Nietzsche*, *Studia nad Faszyzmem i Zbrodniami Hitlerowskimi* 2008, vol. XXX, pp. 37-64; W. Mackiewicz, *Mysł Fryderyka Nietzschego*

SUBJECTIVE NATION-FORMING FACTORS: AWARENESS AND EMOTIONS
(LOVE OF ONE'S MOTHERLAND)

Subjective factors include the awareness of belonging to a nation and emotional attachment to that nation. The question to be asked is: did Nietzsche refer to these elements when defining identity?

According to Nietzsche, the need to communicate was a factor which contributed to the growth of consciousness. For this reason “‘knowing himself,’ will always just call into consciousness the non-individual in him, namely, his ‘averageness’.”⁸ A person usually uncritically accepts the value system in which he or she was raised. The source of a larger part of one's consciousness is found exactly in these “external” elements and not in one's own deliberations. Nietzsche rejected the thesis that consciousness defines us, because it is but one of the variables which constitute us.

The emotional involvement of citizens is equally important, if not of key importance, to the existence of a nation. This factor was strongly emphasised by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, who was one of the first philosophers to write about nationalism, attempting to define a nation and postulating its creation.⁹

What was Nietzsche's response to this view? First of all, he judged the belief in lasting passions to be wishful thinking. For this reason, he viewed wedding vows promising lasting affection to be a farce. One can promise to act as if one loved, but not love itself, since feelings are involuntary. However, it is worth examining the respect which marriage enjoys. Nietzsche pointed out that all institutions based on emotions and a belief in their lasting duration are perceived to be of noble value, and consequently they grow in strength. For this reason, propagation of the idea that emotions are a basic and lasting social bond is a desired lie.

Every institution which has conceded to a passion the *belief in the duration of the latter*, and responsibility for this duration, in spite of the nature of the passion itself, has raised the passion to a higher level: and he who is thenceforth seized with such a passion does not, as formerly, think himself lowered in the estimation of others or brought into danger on that account, but on the contrary believes himself to be raised, both in the opinion of himself and of his equals. Let us recall

w Polsce w latach 1947-1997. Studium historyczno-krytyczne, Warsaw 1999, pp. 7-27, 134-150. See also: H. F. Peters, *Zarathustra's Sister. The Case of Elisabeth and Friedrich Nietzsche*, New York 1985.

⁸ F. Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom*, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE JOYFUL WISDOM, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/52881/52881-h/52881-h.htm> [354].

⁹ Rousseau emphasised the nation-forming role of the state. The advice he gave to people aspiring to create politics in Poland was: “In the present state of affairs, I can see only one way to give her the stability she lacks: it is to infuse, so to speak, the spirit of the Confederation² throughout the nation; it is to establish the Republic so firmly in the hearts of the Poles that she will maintain her existence there in spite of all the efforts of her oppressors.” J. J. Rousseau, *Considerations on the Government of Poland and on its Proposed Reformation*, completed but not published, April 1772, <http://www.constitution.org/jjr/poland.htm>, Chapter III, Application. More in: M. Baranowska, *U źródeł nacjonalizmu: Idea narodu w filozofii Jana Jakuba Rousseau*, *Studia nad Autorytaryzmem i Totalitaryzmem*, Vol. 35 (2013), Issue 2, Wrocław 2013, pp. 7-24.

institutions and customs which, out of the fiery devotion of a moment, have created eternal fidelity; out of the pleasure of anger, eternal vengeance; out of despair, eternal mourning; out of a single hasty word, eternal obligation. A great deal of hypocrisy and falsehood came into the world as the result of such transformations; but each time, too, at the cost of such disadvantages, a new and *superhuman* conception which elevates mankind.¹⁰

Summing up, the conclusion can be offered that references to subjective factors, i.e. to consciousness and feelings, are considered by Nietzsche to be decidedly insufficient to define what a person is.

OBJECTIVE NATION-FORMING FACTORS: RACE, CULTURE, STATE

Race

Among objective nation-forming factors, racial homogeneity may be mentioned. The question is whether Nietzsche made racist comments. Let us quote one aphorism from *The Dawn of Day*:

FEAR AND INTELLIGENCE. If that which is now expressly maintained is true, viz. that the cause of the black pigment of the skin must not be sought in light, might this phenomenon perhaps be the ultimate effect of frequent fits of passion accumulated for century after century (and an afflux of blood under the skin)? while in other and more intelligent races the equally frequent spasms of fear and blanching may have resulted in the white colour of the skin? For the degree of timidity is the standard by which the intelligence may be measured; and the fact that men give themselves up to blind anger is an indication that their animal nature is still near the surface, and is longing for an opportunity to make its presence felt once more. Thus a brownish-grey would probably be the primitive colour of man – something of the ape and the bear, as is only proper.¹¹

By quoting the above aphorism in full, we make possible an interpretation of Nietzsche's reasoning. Firstly, he was convinced that character traits and internal bodily processes were coupled with one's appearance. The colour of skin was, according to the knowledge accessible to him, not a reaction to the sun's radiation. This view was common in his times and led him to conclude that persons of a particular race must have different character traits. It is worth noting his question marks, which indicate that he was not sure whether the opinions he was relating were reliable. He believed also that all people had common ancestors.

Nietzsche frequently used the term "race" when pointing to the relevance of inheritance of some positive or negative traits which influenced the "quality" of children born. In his opinion mixed races prevailed. Mixed races had "disharmonious" qualities both bodily, and in their customs and value hierarchies. This is how he defined *race* – not only as a biological category, but also cultural and axiological. Nietzsche

¹⁰ F. Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day*, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DAWN OF DAY, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/39955/39955-h/39955-h.html> [27].

¹¹ *Ibidem*, [241].

did not question that some traits are inherited, hence the importance of marriage. He argued that marriage should not be motivated by emotions or sexual drive, but by “political” reasons, as in the past – this meant the descent, rank, level of affluence and reproductive potential of one’s future spouse. All of these elements are essential in ensuring the quality of one’s offspring.

It is quite impossible for a man NOT to have the qualities and predilections of his parents and ancestors in his constitution, whatever appearances may suggest to the contrary. This is the problem of race. Granted that one knows something of the parents, it is admissible to draw a conclusion about the child [...] and with the help of the best education and culture one will only succeed in DECEIVING with regard to such heredity.¹²

Proper upbringing may suppress or harness the instincts man has, but it cannot eliminate them. The “waste” specimens, namely deformed, weak and sick persons, are needed in the course of development, but society does not have to “promote” their procreation.¹³ Nietzsche was of the opinion that castration would be desirable to protect both society and future offspring against parents who would become tormentors.

There are cases where to have a child would be a crime [...] Society as the trustee of life, is responsible to life for every botched life that comes into existence, and as it has to atone for such lives, it ought consequently to make it impossible for them ever to see the light of day: it should in many cases actually prevent the act of procreation [...].¹⁴

In spite of his straightforward thesis on heredity, which was the “race” issue, Nietzsche questioned the concept that the traits of one’s ancestors determine one’s life in its entirety. After Aristotle, he referred to examples of child-geniuses whose predispositions were not inherited from their parents, and who often became mad or were unable to exceed average expectations. It is worth adding that the author of *The Dawn*, whose health was poor, did not view illness as a factor precluding one’s creative growth. Many times he emphasised that his sickness freed him and mobilised him to be more active. Of course, taking care of one’s physical fitness, which is essential for a healthy body, is recommended; however, of primary importance is mental power, understood as self-discipline in controlling one’s instincts. This power, and not inherited genes, decides whom one becomes. This is also echoed in Nietzsche’s ideas about a future caste-based

¹² F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OF BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4363/4363-h/4363-h.htm> [264].

¹³ “Decay, decline, and waste, are, *per se*, in no way open to objection; they are the natural consequences of life and vital growth. [...] a society is not at liberty to remain young. And even in its prime it must bring forth ordure and decaying matter. The more energetically and daringly it advances, the richer will it be in failures and in deformities, and the nearer it will be to its fall. Age is not deferred by means of institutions. Nor is illness. Nor is vice.” F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, Book I and II, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE WILL TO POWER, BOOK I AND II, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/52914/52914-h/52914-h.htm>, [40].

¹⁴ F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, Book III and IV, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE WILL TO POWER, BOOK III AND IV, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/52915/52915-h/52915-h.htm>, Book III [734].

social structure. These castes were not to be hermetically closed, as they were in India, but membership of them was to be related to one's effort and work.¹⁵

It should be underlined that nationalism is not the same as racism, although in many of its forms there is a relation between these two concepts.¹⁶ The relation between nationality and race in the philosophy of the author of *The Antichrist* raises some doubts. He argued that a person was not born a German or a Pole, but became one by accepting a relevant system of values. Nationality is thus not an outcome of biological factors, hence race and nationality are not the same. However, it is worth referring to Nietzsche's opinions about himself, which contradict the above. His family believed that they had noble Polish Protestant ancestors, who were persecuted and fled from Poland around 1715. Nietzsche justified his claim of Polish origin by referring to his physiognomy and the fact that abroad he was taken for a Pole, and some people noticed that facial features similar to his could be seen in Matejko's paintings.¹⁷ It should be added that Max Oehler's research and Curt Paul Janz's meticulous study on Polish heraldry have questioned this "family legend".¹⁸

To complement the above considerations, some words of Nietzsche himself should be quoted which seem to reflect his attitude to both the race category and the phenomenon of racism:

Maxim: To associate with no man who takes any part in the mendacious race swindle. [21]

What quagmires and mendacity must there be about if it is possible, in the modern European hotch-potch, to raise questions of "race"! [20]¹⁹

¹⁵ More on Nietzsche's vision of society in: M. Baranowska, *Crusoe i Piętaszek. Nowa wizja stosunków społecznych Nietzschego*, in: R. M. Małajny (ed.), *Konstytucjonalizm a doktryny polityczno-prawne. Najnowsze kierunki badań*, Katowice 2008, pp. 39-52.

¹⁶ The concept of racial purity was employed by the Nazis, for example. It is worth noting that the issue of racism in the writings of the 19th-century philosophers is frequently bypassed, because it is troublesome to ascribe this idea to the most outstanding philosophers like Kant or Hegel, who shaped the European intellectual tradition.

¹⁷ F. Overbeck, *Erinnerungen an Friedrich Nietzsche*, Berlin 2011. More on this subject in: J. Pietrzak, *Polskość Fryderyka Nietzschego*, *Studia Filozoficzne*, 1988, No 1. Anecdotally, in 1930, the District Court in Toruń ruled that an issue of the *Slowo Pomorskie* daily was to be confiscated, because it published a photograph of Nietzsche with the caption: "He ended in a mental institution." The Court mistook Nietzsche's photograph for a photo of Piłsudski. More on this topic and on the superman perception of Piłsudski in Polish journalistic writings and literature in: G. Kowal, *Friedrich Nietzsche w publicystyce i literaturze polskiej lat 1919-1939*, Warsaw 2005, p. 251 and 280-297.

¹⁸ See: R. J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche: The Man and his Philosophy*, 2nd rvd. edn., Cambridge 2001, pp. 4-6; C. P. Janz, *Friedrich Nietzsche. Biographie in drei Bänden*, Vol. 1, Munich 1978, p. 26ff. Stanisław Przybyszewski was the first Pole to do research into Nietzsche. He made references to claims about Nietzsche's Polish origin and thus of his philosophy. Przybyszewski's views were long repeated in Polish literature. Influenced by these views, Szerlitt wrote a book on Polish traits in Nietzsche's life and philosophy: B. Szerlitt, *Polskość Nietzschego i jego filozofii*, Warsaw 1930. More in: G. Kowal, *op.cit.*, pp. 231-273.

¹⁹ F. Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*. The Complete Works, Volume Thirteen. PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE GENEALOGY OF MORALS, <http://gutenberg.readingroo.ms/5/2/3/1/52319/52319-h/52319-h.htm> [20 and 21].

Culture and values

It seems, however, that the idea that we become part of a nation prevails in Nietzsche's writings. In *The Dawn of Day* he metaphorically compared the growth of a man to cultivating a garden. We are not a *fait accompli*, but we can shape our instincts as we choose. "We may do this with the good or bad taste of a gardener, and as it were, in the French, English, Dutch, or Chinese style."²⁰ This observation speaks for the universality of man's potential and his plasticity in becoming part of a nation. Nietzsche thought that people were not equal, that each had a different place in the social hierarchy and this place depended on the growth of the "will to power".²¹ It follows that not everyone is able to shape his identity. The majority do not cultivate their gardens, letting natural forces and external stimuli be decisive in shaping them. No wonder that the preconception that a person is an entity whose nature does not change and is inborn is so widespread. This preconception contains a clearly defined national identity too. According to Nietzsche, the majority are simply not aware of their changeability, conditioned by the external world. A perfect description of such a person is that of Stepan Arkadyevitch Oblonsky in Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*:

[...] in spite of the fact that science, art, and politics had no special interest for him, he firmly held those views on all these subjects which were held by the majority and by his paper, and he only changed them when the majority changed them—or, more strictly speaking, he did not change them, but they imperceptibly changed of themselves within him.

Stepan Arkadyevitch had not chosen his political opinions or his views; these political opinions and views had come to him of themselves, just as he did not choose the shapes of his hat and coat, but simply took those that were being worn. And for him, living in a certain society—owing to the need, ordinarily developed at years of discretion, for some degree of mental activity—to have views was just as indispensable as to have a hat.²²

According to Nietzsche, in some conditionalities, including the climate, soil, threats, and labour, a group of people who have lived together for a longer time begin to share common features, world views, values and aesthetic judgements. This is the way a nation is shaped. Nationality, on the other hand, is a concept reflecting the averaged traits of a community.

²⁰ F. Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day*, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DAWN OF DAY, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/39955/39955-h/39955-h.html> [560].

²¹ The will to power is the energy which underlines any activity and the desire to make it grow is a perpetual process of coming into existence. As man is the will to power, his personality depends on its strength. "The will to power reveals its proper sense in metaphysics exclusively. This means that it is not a power or energy in the physical sense though the entire material reality depends on it. It is not a life force in the biological sense nor it is the instinct of self-preservation though everything that is alive depends on it. [...] An identification of the will to power with any of the above senses would be tantamount to its limitation, deflection and adulteration of its essence." A. Kucner, *Friedrich Nietzsche. Źródła i perspektywy antropologii*, Olsztyn 2001, pp. 97-98.

²² L. Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OF ANNA KARENINA, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1399/1399-h/1399-h.htm>, Chapter 3.

The thesis that some specific traits or features are acquired points to axiological and cultural factors which are decisive in the creation of nationality. Language is unquestionably a basic element of culture. Nietzsche argued that a language makes a powerful contribution to group integrity. Words reflect certain sensations and are better understood by people who experience them together. That is why members of a given nation understand each other better than they understand members of other nations, even if they speak the same language. Thus the history of language is a history of “a process of abbreviation” as quick comprehension draws people closer. This feature, mutual understanding, is fundamental to the group’s – the nation’s – viability.

Rituals play a role in fostering group integrity. Shared celebrations, experiencing of emotions and cheering are important factors contributing to the development of a feeling of unity. Nietzsche emphasised that rituals are the domain of weak people who need to feel – if only for a while – that they are participating in something grand and important, and its form, a ritual, satisfies their needs because they do not give a thought to its meaning or content.²³ Writing about common festivities Nietzsche noted that they are frequently cruel. In every man resides “the blond beast” pacified every day by norms regulating social life. From time to time, however, these instincts must break out for the community to function harmoniously. Wars, bloody festivities and also sporting events serve this very purpose.²⁴

The institution of the state

Nietzsche argued that the state plays a large role in the creation of culture. Considering the very genesis of this institution, which consolidates community existence, he pointed out that laws, values and customs were created by the strongest. In this way they consolidated the society and strengthened their power. They called “good” everything that was noble and dignified, while “bad” was what was weak and vulgar.

²³ For the weak ones, it is most important to have a feeling that they are part of a group. The feeling of community lifts the morale and thanks to it they can devotedly and safely follow the crowd. Nietzsche pointed out that: “Prayer has been devised for such men as have never any thoughts of their own [...] what shall these people do in holy places and in all important situations in life which require repose and some kind of dignity? In order at least that they may not *disturb*, the wisdom of all the founders of religions, the small as well as the great, has commended to them the formula of prayer, as a long mechanical labour of the lips, united with an effort of the memory, and with a uniform, prescribed attitude of hands and feet – *and eyes!*” F. Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom*, Complete Works, Volume Ten, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE JOYFUL WISDOM, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/52124/52124-h/52124-h.htm> [128].

²⁴ Every society worships cruelty in its own way and this is why cruelty is part of its culture. “What the Roman enjoys in the arena, the Christian in the ecstasies of the cross, the Spaniard at the sight of the faggot and stake, or of the bull-fight, the present-day Japanese who presses his way to the tragedy, the workman of the Parisian suburbs who has a homesickness for bloody revolutions, the Wagnerienne who, with unhinged will, ‘undergoes’ the performance of ‘Tristan and Isolde’ – what all these enjoy, and strive with mysterious ardour to drink in, is the philtre of the great Circe ‘cruelty’.” F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4363/4363-h/4363-h.htm> [229].

In this way they used values to sanction their higher, “good” rank in society. Initially, religious and secular authorities were one and the same, or were very closely linked. Those in power undoubtedly found religious power attractive. The power of religious authorities was based on total submission and the possibility of referring to God’s unquestionable will. Gradually, the weak, that is the majority, were able to accumulate enough power to control the caste of lords. This was due to changes in the catalogue of values and customs. The cause was resentment – a reversal of values. Weakness, and the values which were its part, became virtues. Of such a state Nietzsche wrote:

A state, is called the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly lieth it also; and this lie creepeth from its mouth: “I, the state, am the people.”

It is a lie! Creators were they who created peoples, and hung a faith and a love over them: thus they served life.²⁵

A state has a culture-creating role, *ergo* it creates a nation. Later it becomes a patron of arts, and then it engages in providing universal education.

NIETZSCHE ON BEING A GERMAN AND A POLE

Nietzsche, while defining nationality in axiological and cultural terms, questioned his own Germanness. In Reginald John Hollingdale’s opinion, Nietzsche’s belief in his Polish provenance was not motivated by a desire to highlight his noble ancestry. It was a manifesto distancing himself from the German culture.²⁶ For Nietzsche, being Polish meant identification with Polish culture. He identified himself with the tradition of *liberum veto*, the skill of opposing all others. However, for Nietzsche the greatest manifestation of Polish culture was surely Chopin’s music, which he adored.²⁷ That music had for Nietzsche a universal dimension, and this was why he identified himself with Chopin’s compositions so strongly.²⁸

He ruthlessly criticised Germans: “It is even part of my ambition to be considered as essentially a despiser of Germans. [...] A man lowers himself by frequenting the society of Germans [...] I can no longer abide this race with which a man is always in bad company.”²⁹ It should be remembered that in *Ecce Homo* he also wrote: “[...]”

²⁵ F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra. A Book for All and None*, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THUS SPAKE ZARATHUSTRA, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1998/1998-h/1998-h.htm>, XI.THE NEW IDOL.

²⁶ Cf. R. J. Hollingdale, *op.cit.*, pp. 4-6.

²⁷ For a summary of various publications pointing to the interference between Chopin’s music and Nietzsche’s writing style see: G. Kowal, *op.cit.*, pp. 224-231.

²⁸ “Chopin was born in Poland and formed by Polish culture and Nietzsche by German culture. Nevertheless, these great Europeans [...] rose above dividing lines.” *Ibidem*, p. 230.

²⁹ F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ECCE HOMO, *Why I am so wise*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/52190/52190-h/52190-h.htm> [4]. More on Nietzsche’s attitude to Germans in: Z. Kaźmierczak, *Friedrich Nietzsche jako odnowiciel umysłowości pierwotnej. Analiza w kontekście fenomenologii religii Gerardusa van der Leeuwa*, Kraków 2000, pp. 308-316.

I am perhaps more German than modern Germans – mere Imperial Germans – can hope to be, – I, the last anti-political German.”³⁰ Nietzsche identified himself with a part of German culture. He admired Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, but criticised manifestations of modern German culture as “decadence”.³¹ He underlined: “I could never have survived my youth without Wagnerian music. For I was condemned to the society of Germans. If a man wish to get rid of a feeling of insufferable oppression, he has to take to hashish. Well, I had to take to Wagner.”³² In this way he explained how he had become a Wagnerite in his youth. Later, he clashed with the composer and was critical about his art. “What is it that I have never forgiven Wagner? The fact that he condescended to the Germans that he became a German Imperialist.... Wherever Germany spreads, she ruins culture.”³³

The author of *The Antichrist* criticised Germans also for lacking “the third ear”, that is the skill of recognising the tempo of a sentence, and thus not being able to understand the sentence itself. The art of style was foreign to Germans, he claimed. He advised following the practice of Antique man, who read aloud and would have been astonished that someone could read only with his eyes, in secrecy. That was why the rules of the written and spoken styles were the same. They required changes in tone and tempo, and had to respect the requirements of the ear and larynx. In German history only preachers attained some proficiency in oratory, because they practised it. Nietzsche recognised as a masterpiece of German prose Luther’s Bible, which he considered the greatest German book ever.

Nietzsche’s ambivalent attitude towards being a German followed from his perception of the German nation as torn by contradictions.

As a people made up of the most extraordinary mixing and mingling of races, perhaps even with a preponderance of the pre-Aryan element as the “people of the centre” in every sense of the term, the Germans are more intangible, more ample, more contradictory, more unknown, more incalculable, more surprising, and even more terrifying than other peoples are to themselves:—they escape DEFINITION [...]

If any one wishes to see the “German soul” demonstrated ad oculos, let him only look at German taste, at German arts and manners what boorish indifference to “taste”! How the noblest and the commonest stand there in juxtaposition! How disorderly and how rich is the whole constitution of this soul!³⁴

³⁰ F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo...*, [3].

³¹ Diane Morgan in her analysis of aphorisms referring to Goethe underlines the complexity of the nationality issue in Nietzsche’s philosophy. “Far from offering a straightforward dismissal of national culture, Nietzsche is here reformulating its nature and scope. He suggests that great men like Goethe are able to tap the potential for dynamic change that national culture contains. Instead of remaining locked into the senseless repetition of redundant customs, an evolving national identity can become a rich source of energy for a ‘forward-moving people’.” D. Morgan, *Nietzsche and National Identity*, in: K. Ansell Pearson (ed.), *A Companion to Nietzsche*, Malden 2009, p. 465.

³² F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo...*, WHY I AM SO CLEVER [6].

³³ *Ibidem*, [5].

³⁴ F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4363/4363-h/4363-h.htm>, CHAPTER VIII. PEOPLES AND COUNTRIES [244].

Nietzsche pointed out the positive and negative traits of various nations and thought it was absurd to take a one-sided view. It should be noted that he was describing the average level of a group, and not individuals.

NATIONALISM THAT IS HOSTILITY

In nationalistic thought there is a strong belief that one's own group is exceptional, and this usually goes hand in hand with the feeling of superiority. Often it becomes the basis for a contemptuous and hostile attitude towards other national groups. Roman Tokarczyk, in his analysis of nationalist ideology, underlined that every nation driven by national egoism refers or resorts to fighting other nations in various crisis situations.³⁵

To strengthen the integrity of their own nation and to present their nation as superior in the hierarchy of nations, nationalists create an image of the enemy. It is worth noting that the threat does not have to be real; the purpose of its vision is to captivate the imagination of the group. This phenomenon was aptly identified by Marek Edelman:

In actual fact Holocaust has nothing in common with anti-Semitism. And it all took place many times in history. And it does. Armenians, Cambodia, Biafra, Somalia, Yugoslavia [...] Nothing has changed. All these nationalisms, chauvinisms, hatred are human characteristics. And who becomes the scapegoat is always somewhat incidental [...] In any case, an enemy will be found because it is easy to find one. And if there is none, the enemy will be created.³⁶

³⁵ R. Tokarczyk, *op.cit.*, p. 349.

³⁶ M. Edelman, *O powstaniu w getcie, Polakach, Żydach i współczesnym świecie - rozmowa z Markiem Edelmanem*, Tygodnik Powszechny, 18 April 1993, No. 16 (2284), p. 4. We may also quote Vaclav Havel: "In the subconsciousness of haters there slumbers a perverse feeling that they alone possess the truth, that they are some kind of superhumans or even gods, and thus deserve the world's complete recognition, even its complete submissiveness and loyalty, if not its blind obedience. They want to be the centre of the world and are constantly frustrated and irritated because the world does not accept and recognize them as such; indeed, it may not even pay any attention to them, and perhaps it even ridicules them. [...] The person who hates is never able to see the cause of his metaphysical failure in himself and the way he so completely overestimates his own worth. In his eyes, it is the surrounding world that is to blame. The trouble is that this is too abstract, vague and incomprehensible. It has to be personified because hatred as a very particular kind of tumescence of the soul requires a particular object. And so the person who hates seeks out a particular offender. Of course this offender is merely a stand-in, arbitrarily chosen and therefore easily interchangeable. I have observed that for the hater, hatred is more important than its object; he can rapidly change objects without changing anything essential in the relationship. This is understandable. He does not harbour hatred toward a particular person, but to what that person represents: a complex of obstacles to the absolute, to absolute recognition, absolute power, total identification with God, truth and the order of the world. Hatred for one's neighbour, therefore, would seem to be only a physiological embodiment of hatred for the universe that is perceived to be the cause of one's own universal failure." V. Havel, Oslo Conference on *The Anatomy of Hate*, Oslo, 28 August 1990, http://vaclavhavel.cz/showtrans.php?cat=projevy&val=299_aj_projevy.html&typ=HTML.

This is exactly how Nietzsche perceived the enemy's functions in the life of an individual and of a community. In *The Dawn of Day* he pointed out that usually there is no desire to know the enemy well. Stereotypes, that is a very simplified and often vulgarised perception, are useful in giving oneself the attribute of superiority. Interestingly, names of nations reflect such stereotypes, and usually they are insults.³⁷ Every nation and race have a name which is derogatory.

Both a group and a weak man need an enemy who will mirror their prejudices. Nationalism ensures that there is the opposition between what is familiar and what is foreign (us *versus* them); it gives one the feeling of uniqueness and superiority over others. History teaches us that when pathogenic factors accumulate, people start to act: they carry out ethnic cleansing, they murder. In fact, the majority usually do not want a war. For them, prejudices, disparaging vocabulary and harmful stereotypes are enough to feel better. People want bread, circuses and prejudices. Nationalism provides all this (labour for the benefit of the motherland, national holidays, a sense of superiority) and this is the basis for its taking root in social and political life.

THE CRITIQUE OF NATIONALISM

Nietzsche strongly criticised nationalism because he thought that assessing a man through the prism of nationality devalued him.³⁸ Obviously, national traits shaped by factors like language, culture, climate or food do have an impact on people.

[...] meat boiled to shreds, vegetables cooked with fat and flour [...] And, if you add thereto the absolutely bestial post-prandial drinking habits of the *ancients*, and not alone of the ancient Germans, you will understand where German intellect took its origin – that is to say, in sadly disordered intestines... German intellect is indigestion; it can assimilate nothing.³⁹

One should ask whether these elements, like intestines for example, exhaust the description of a man and whether it is not absurd to define anyone through their lens. Those who judge and segregate people using the nationality criterion apparently do not see anything valuable in themselves, since they squeeze everything they are into

³⁷ “Do not let us forget that the names of peoples are generally names of reproach. The Tartars, for example, according to their name, are ‘the dogs’; they were so christened by the Chinese. *Deutschen* (Germans) means originally ‘heathen’: it is thus that the Goths after their conversion named the great mass of their unbaptized fellow-tribes, according to the indication in their translation of the Septuagint, in which the heathen are designated by the word which in Greek signifies ‘the nations.’ (See *Ulfilas*.)” F. Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom. Complete Works*, Volume Ten, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE JOYFUL WISDOM <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/52124/52124-h/52124-h.htm> [146].

³⁸ Józef Pietrzak writes that Nietzsche “does not distinguish much between concepts like patriotism and nationalism. The patriotism of one nation is sometimes felt to be its nationalism by another nation.” J. Pietrzak, *Uniwersalizm europejski a kultury narodowe w filozofii Fryderyka Nietzschego*, Kultura i Społeczeństwo, 1987, No. 1-2, p. 97.

³⁹ F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ECCE HOMO, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/52190/52190-h/52190-h.htm#WHY_I_AM_SO_WISE, WHY I AM SO CLEVER [1].

such a narrow mould. Nietzsche judged German nationalists as follows: “The Germans have not the faintest idea of how vulgar they are – but this in itself is the acme of vulgarity, – they are not even ashamed of being merely Germans.”⁴⁰ Nationalists perceive themselves only through the prism of community. They are weak people who are unable to create values constituting their existence. They seek a commander – ruthless and thoughtless, and find it in the word *nation*. Actually, the success of nationalism and the new idol, the Nation, has followed from the fact that modernity is a world whose “God is dead” and thus the old God has been replaced with a new idol.

To nationalists, the national “I” is easily identifiable because its specificity is something constant. Nietzsche, on the other hand, approached it as a description – an averaged level – of culture, with nothing constant in it. This is why basing one’s world view on national differences means so little to true creators of culture.⁴¹ For this reason, references to national differences should not be the basis for politicking. In Nietzsche’s opinion, this was unfortunately what had happened in Germany, where education – which once was at a high level – had been replaced by the madness of nationalism. The philosopher considered it to be a malady, an illness with attacks of stupefaction in various forms: anti-French folly, anti-Polish folly, anti-Jewish folly, the Wagnerian, the Christian-Romantic or the Prussian folly.

It is worth emphasising that Nietzsche criticised Germans for their widespread anti-Semitism, which was founded on the lowest human instincts. “Oh what good deed is a Jew under German cattle! underestimate the gentlemen... The anti-Semites.”⁴² Obviously it is not that Nietzsche did not criticise the Jews, as that nation was responsible for the emergence of decadent values and religion. However, he underlined that:

By the way, the great problem of the *Jews* only exists within the national States, inasmuch as their energy and higher intelligence, their intellectual and volitional capital, accumulated from generation to generation in tedious schools of suffering, must necessarily attain to universal supremacy here to an extent provocative of envy and hatred; so that the literary misconduct is becoming prevalent in almost all modern nations – and all the more so as they again set up to be national – of sacrificing the Jews as the scape-goats of all possible public and private abuses. [...] Every nation, every individual, has unpleasant and even dangerous qualities – it is cruel to require that the Jew should be an exception.⁴³

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/52190/52190-h/52190-h.htm#THE_CASE_OF_WAGNER_A_MUSICIANS_PROBLEM, THE CASE OF WAGNER: A MUSICIAN’S PROBLEM [4].

⁴¹ “For this reason all arguments based on national character are so little binding on one who aims at the alteration of convictions – in other words, at culture.” F. Nietzsche, *Human, All-Too-Human*. Part II, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/37841/37841-h/37841-h.html#toc5>, Part I Miscellaneous Maxims And Opinions [323]. The interweaving of separate cultural heritages is the requirement for individuals and societies not to stagnate. “In this light, the concept of nation melts with primitivism, with closing the gate to foreign impacts.” J. Pietrzak, *Uniwersalizm europejski a kultury narodowe w filozofii Fryderyka Nietzschego*, p. 96.

⁴² F. Nietzsche, *Nietzsche’s Last Notebooks 1888*. Translator Daniel Fidel Ferrer. https://books.google.pl/books/about/Nietzsche_s_Last_Notebooks_1888.html?id=8aANUbCezaEC&redir_esc=y, 21[6].

⁴³ F. Nietzsche, *Human All-Too-Human*, Part 1. Complete Works, Volume Six. PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HUMAN ALL-TOO-HUMAN, PART 1, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/51935/51935->

To summarise: Nietzsche believed that thinking in national terms was a symptom of weakness or sickness.

CONCLUSION: ON BEING A EUROPEAN

Friedrich Nietzsche was a philosopher who mercilessly criticised inherited patterns of conduct, value systems and traditional ways of perceiving reality. He did not succumb to the nationalist trends prevailing in the 19th century. In his writings we find remarks on his perception of this socio-political movement and on its primary category, nationality. The philosopher defined this as a set of averaged traits of a collectivity which was derivative. It appears that of all factors shaping these traits, culture and shared values were recognised to be the most important. Describing himself as a German while denying it at the same time, Nietzsche referred to a culture in which he saw both positive and negative sides. Because of the degeneration and politicisation of German culture, he often preferred to refer to his Polishness. It needs to be emphasised that he treated national traits only as certain elements of his personality, and he never defined himself or others through the prism of such a narrow concept as nationality. It is worth noting that Nietzsche most often called himself a European, and his philosophy expressly advanced into universalism – European at first, and then global. His *Übermensch* or Superman, who was the goal of his philosophical thinking, was a cosmopolitan, a creator of a new, individual morality based on the will to power. This morality was the backbone of all of the Superman's activities.⁴⁴ People whose will to power is strong are not guided by hatred of others, because they are not afraid of anything. They rely on themselves and their power. It is the Superman who will create the new politics which Nietzsche called *great politics*.⁴⁵

It needs to be remembered, however, that there will never be a society made up of Supermen only. This is why next to the Superman – a cosmopolitan who overcomes

h/51935-h.htm [475]. Nietzsche mercilessly criticised anti-Semites, including his sister Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche and her husband Bernhard. "In the anti-Semite movement of the 1880s, he saw a rebellion of average people who illegally pretended to belong to the master race only because they thought they were Aryans. In their context, Nietzsche was even ready to argue for the racial superiority of Jews and to defend it. His argument was: for centuries Jews had to defend themselves against attacks and that is why they developed a persistent, refined and self-preserving spirit contributing simultaneously a necessary treasure to Europe's history." R. Safranski, *Nietzsche. Biografia myśli*, Warsaw 2003, p. 392. More on Nietzsche's attitude towards Jews in: J. Golomb, *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, London 1997; Z. Kaźmierczak, *op.cit.*, pp. 330-336; R. Kreis, *Nietzsche, Wagner und die Juden*, Würzburg 1995; J. Pietrzak, *Fryderyk Nietzsche a antysemityzm*, *Studia Filozoficzne*, 1987, No. 7; W. Santaniello, *Nietzsche, God, and the Jews. His Critique of Judeo-Christianity in Relation to the Nazi Myth*, New York 1994.

⁴⁴ Nietzsche's cosmopolitanism results from his ontological assumptions. Nietzsche described Superman to be like the joyful Dionysos. As Henryk Benisz observed: "The cult of Dionysos was disruptive to urban and even stately particularisms, because a universalist tendency was its essential and most characteristic feature". H. Benisz, *Nietzsche i filozofia dionizyjska*, Warsaw 2001, p. 419.

⁴⁵ More on *great politics* in: M. Baranowska, *Jednostka, państwo i prawo w filozofii Fryderyka Nietzschego. Mała vs wielka polityka*, Toruń 2009, pp. 213-322.

inherited cultural patterns, who “grows out” of a nationality – there will exist people of slave morality who will need a master. For this reason the Superman will accept the needs of the mob.

The hypocritical gloss with which all *civil institutions* are covered as if they were *outgrowths of morality*... e.g., marriage, work, profession, fatherland, family, order, law. But as they are all designed for the most *mediocre* type of man, to guard against exceptions and exceptional needs, it is only fitting that here many lies are told.⁴⁶

He accepted that people who have slave morality need defined, concrete collectivities to identify with and define themselves by, but he foresaw that nations would gradually vanish in processes of diffusion and universalisation, and a new European race would emerge.⁴⁷

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he wrote: “[...] I have already reached my SERIOUS TOPIC, the ‘European problem,’ as I understand it, the rearing of a new ruling caste for Europe.”⁴⁸ The new European race will come into being through a process of purification which Nietzsche described as the crossbreeding of existing races. It needs to be emphasised that the European race is identical with European culture, which results from the interpenetration of national cultures. The interpenetration of separate national heritages is a condition ensuring that individuals and whole communities do not stagnate. Nietzsche thought that the cultural unity of Europeans was indispensable, and pointed to manifestations of this process which could be noticed in the works of contemporary great artists. They expressed, even if subconsciously, a deeply rooted desire to unify all of Europe. It was for these reasons that Nietzsche was so critical about nationalists and generally the politics of the second half of the 19th century.

⁴⁶ F. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, Translator Kate Sturge, Cambridge 2003, p.187, 10 [84].

⁴⁷ “Commerce and industry, interchange of books and letters, the universality of all higher culture, the rapid changing of locality and landscape, and the present nomadic life of all who are not landowners – these circumstances necessarily bring with them a weakening, and finally a destruction of nationalities, at least of European nationalities; so that, in consequence of perpetual crossings, there must arise out of them all a mixed race, that of the European man.” F. Nietzsche, *Human All-Too-Human*, Part 1. Complete Works, Volume Six. PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/51935/51935-h/51935-h.htm> [475].

⁴⁸ F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4363/4363-h/4363-h.htm> [251]. “Here, Nietzsche raised an issue which – in its extreme version – surfaced in Nazi Germany, and still today is of academics’ interest: is it possible to create a more perfect man, a superman, by the selection and mating of individuals outstanding in terms of their intellectual and physical fitness? It is worth noting that the hypothesis which Nietzsche discussed is not based on the assumption that there is a chosen race best suited to rule the world. The author of *Zarathustra* noted positive traits of different races (he mentioned Slavs, Jews and Germans) and deliberated on whether it was possible to create a new ‘caste’ which would embody all of what was best in mankind. This demonstrates how poor the Nazi interpretation of Nietzsche’s ‘superman’ was. The creation of a new race depends not only on biological but also on social factors. An inappropriately organised society (for example a democratic one) effectively limits the chance that a superman will emerge.” L. Kusak, *Fryderyk Nietzsche. W poszukiwaniu utraconego ideału*, Kraków 1995, p. 146.

Owing to the morbid estrangement which the nationality-craze has induced and still induces among the nations of Europe, owing also to the short-sighted and hasty-handed politicians, who with the help of this craze, are at present in power, and do not suspect to what extent the disintegrating policy they pursue must necessarily be only an interlude policy—owing to all this and much else that is altogether unmentionable at present, the most unmistakable signs that EUROPE WISHES TO BE ONE, are now overlooked, or arbitrarily and falsely misinterpreted.⁴⁹

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Key words: nationalism, nation, nationality, Nietzsche, cosmopolitanism

ABSTRACT

Friedrich Nietzsche – one of the most influential thinkers – criticised nationalism and anti-Semitism. A reconstruction of his views on national identity demonstrates how multi-faceted and nuanced his approach was. The identity of every man is complex, hybrid, always in the process of being moulded by various experiences and encounters. Nietzsche argued that national identity is based on the average level of culture of a community rather than on biological factors. In this context he negated his German nationality and emphasised the legend of his Polish ancestry. Nietzsche argued that Europe would undergo unification. His project of “great politics” included the emergence of a new European race which he identified with European culture. The main goal of this project was a cosmopolitan Superman (Übermensch), who would overcome the legacy of his national culture. The Superman is a cosmopolitan, because it is impossible to define him in terms of nationality. Nietzsche expected Supermen to become the leaders of Europe.

⁴⁹ F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4363/4363-h/4363-h.htm> [256].